

~~SECRET~~

Throughout their histories the countries and peoples of the Himalayas and of Southeast Asia have been subjected to continually changing foreign influences. They have lived in the shadows of the great civilizations of China and India and have through the centuries adopted many of their religious and cultural forms. In modern times, during the period of colonial domination, Western civilization left its stamp on the cultural, social and political institutions of the area. These influences, however, have been largely limited to the elite of the dominant race. Historically, the leaders of Southeast Asia, when caught between overwhelming outside forces or influences, have taken the line of least resistance and have accommodated to superior power.

There is great ethnic diversity throughout the region. The numerous and very sizeable ethnic minorities have little loyalty beyond their immediate tribal ties and have no sense of national or regional <sup>unity</sup> ~~entity~~. But few of these peoples have any desire for change in their social or cultural patterns and certainly not <sup>(or)</sup> the changes which Communism would bring. None would voluntarily welcome a foreign invader. However, their diversity and disunity, coupled with their insularity and political innocence, tend to make the several countries logical targets for subversion and future Chinese Communist expansion.

HS/CSG-2401

GROUP 1

Peiping has been waging twin campaigns of overt seduction and covert subversion against the countries of Southeast Asia. Overtly the regime poses as a peaceful giant who helps its friends but strikes back powerfully at those who conspire against it. Peiping has given aid to "neutralist" regimes in Burma, Cambodia and Indonesia, and, until its recent adventures in Tibet and Northern India, it has loudly emphasized its pursuit of peace, the Bandung spirit and various schemes for an "atom free" Pacific. Peiping argues that its armed forces are strictly defensive and will never be used to communize a foreign territory. The Chinese Communists continue to insist on their slogan: "Communism cannot be exported."

In the long run, Peiping places its chief hopes on subversion and the instigation of insurgency. This is in line with the belief of regime leaders that the world, and particularly Southeast Asia, is ripe for revolution. *Such* ~~Revolutions~~, they believe, should be encouraged, guided and taken over by Communists wherever practicable.

**SECRET**

Although Communist China, with the largest land army in the world, has the capability to overrun mainland Southeast Asia, Peiping would probably not be willing to risk Western, and particularly U.S., military intervention. They are pursuing and will probably continue to pursue their objectives primarily through subversion, political action and support of "national liberation" struggles. Over the past several years there has been a clear pattern of increasing Communist military, paramilitary and political capabilities for carrying out Peiping's objectives in Southeast Asia.

Continuing Chinese Communist subversive efforts in Southeast Asia in the next decade must be viewed as a major threat to U.S. and Free World security. The vigor of the U.S. reaction to Communist insurgency efforts may largely determine the degree of such efforts, directed not only by Peiping in the Himalaya region and in Southeast Asia, but also by Moscow in Africa and Latin America. Failure of the United States to offer strong resistance to Chinese subversive<sup>on</sup> attempts will almost certainly tend to encourage the Soviet Union elsewhere, thus making more complicated and difficult the problem of U.S. resistance to Communist penetration in all underdeveloped areas.

**SECRET**

One of the most effective means of containing the subversive incursions of the Communists as well as creating a useful instrument of resistance against military invasion of South and Southeast Asia is in helping to increase the influence and control of the Indian and Southeast Asian governments over the tribal peoples who inhabit their mountain regions. From Western Ladakh almost to the Gulf of Tonkin the rugged chain of mountains stretching across the Asian continent provides a natural barrier to Communist advances which has always divided the peoples of northern and southern Asia.

The numerous mountain peoples who live in this area have a strong spirit of independence. Most of these tribes emphasize martial virtues and have strong fighting traditions. Many of them -- the Meos, the Thais, are examples -- have related tribal cousins in southern China. Most of the minority peoples of China and Tibet have been persecuted by the Chinese for centuries. They have suffered even more acutely at the hands of the Communists in recent years. Their willingness to resist, given adequate weapons and supplies, may have been sharpened in recent years. For these reasons they should be regarded as an important potential bulwark against invasion from the north. These mountain groups have only recently become aware of the outside world and, to a large extent, they remain the last uncommitted people in Asia in the Free World-Communist struggle.

If the Chinese Communists were to invade these areas in an overt military operation, armed tribes could force them to use routes largely confined to mountain passes where they could be more effectively repelled. They would also be valuable in guerrilla operations in occupied territory as well as collectors of behind-the-lines intelligence. Indeed, the governments of countries in this area have little choice but to use their hilltribes if they are to successfully combat future Chinese Communist invasions. And the loyalties of these tribal peoples toward their governments must be developed if Peiping's efforts at subversion is to be countered effectively.

In India and in most Southeast Asian countries, however, there is a deep mistrust between the central governments, usually dominated by lowland peoples, and the foothill and hilltribes. The tribespeople have traditionally been treated as second-class citizens. In Burma, the conflict resulting from this antagonism has led to a near-breakdown in the central government and its control over large segments of the tribal population. In Thailand, the traditional mistrust between the central government and minority elements continues to undermine the concept of mutual support against the Communist enemy in China and neighboring Laos.

The government administrations in Northern India and the countries of Southeast Asia are faced with minority problems which are both chronic and acute. If the governments pursue the policy of assimilation too rapidly and forcibly, strong resentments are aroused; if, at the other extreme, they continue to neglect the minorities, long standing resentments are strengthened. To find the middle course between the two extremes is not easy. But until it is found, there will be a grave risk that the minorities will increasingly seek support and even alliance with any anti-government force that may proffer its aid, whether within or outside the country's frontiers.

With a full cognizance of the many-sided problems involved, but with an awareness of their potential as allies against aggressive Communist expansion, the United States should study the whole spectrum presented by the minorities of the Himalayas and of Southeast Asia. We should encourage and materially assist the governments of this region to improve their relations with their tribal peoples to achieve an increasing consciousness of nationality and unity and as a growing bulwark of resistance against Communist incursions, overt or covert, in future years.